



PREPARE
PREpare for PARole and REentry

January 31, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 0318
Criminal Procedure - Post Conviction Review -
Motion for Reduction of Sentence

Dear Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I support SB0318 sponsored by Senator West and ask that a favorable vote be rendered.

I am a beneficiary of the Juvenile Restoration Act (JUVRA) which became effective in October 2021. I pled guilty and was sentenced to a congregate parole eligible life sentence for horrible crimes committed as a fifteen year old in 1979. As the sentencing judge denied my Motion for Reduction of sentence two months later, the Court lost jurisdiction to act in my case. The ninety-day provision for filing for a sentence modification was inadequate to make any accomplishments demonstrate maturity and rehabilitation.

I became eligible for parole in 1993. Although I had amassed a strong record of accomplishments, no avenue would exist for a meaningful parole consideration based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation until 2019. In response to former Governor Glendenning's 'life means life' policy not a single lifer was paroled outright in over two decades. I filed several legal Motions to no avail because the Court still had no jurisdiction to act.

Despite the Court's considerations, intent, and recommendations when imposing sentences, MD has no legal presumption that any prisoner should be released upon reaching parole eligibility. The lack of statutory and regulatory provisions regarding the exercise of MD Parole Commission discretion and the, then, gubernatorial discretion results in disparity without explanation. Additionally, those who have reformed and may be deemed worthy of release consideration prior to and after reaching parole eligibility may never receive it.

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Without the legislation of JuvRA, I would still not know when, if ever, I would be released or what was expected of me to be paroled. Fortunately, the Court recognized my growth and maturity and acted upon its newly gifted jurisdiction in my case. Since 2023 Court release, I am doing well on parole, maintain meaningful employment, involved in the reentry support field, engage prison reform, and live my best law abiding life.

Though I remain deeply sorry for the horrible crimes I committed over four decades ago and spend everyday trying to atone for my actions, I question the justice of holding juveniles, emerging adults, and seniors -reformed men and women- in prison for ten, twenty, thirty years beyond parole eligibility dates. These men and women -whom accepted responsibility for their crimes, did the hard work to improve their social functioning, and became model prisoners and mentors, would be productive citizens.

I believe in redemption and second chances. I believe that I am one of many examples of how the Criminal Justice System can truly work. I believe the State's Attorney Office should have the opportunity initiate release consideration in deserving cases. Thus, I urge this honorable committee to vote favorably for SB0318.

Truly yours,

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